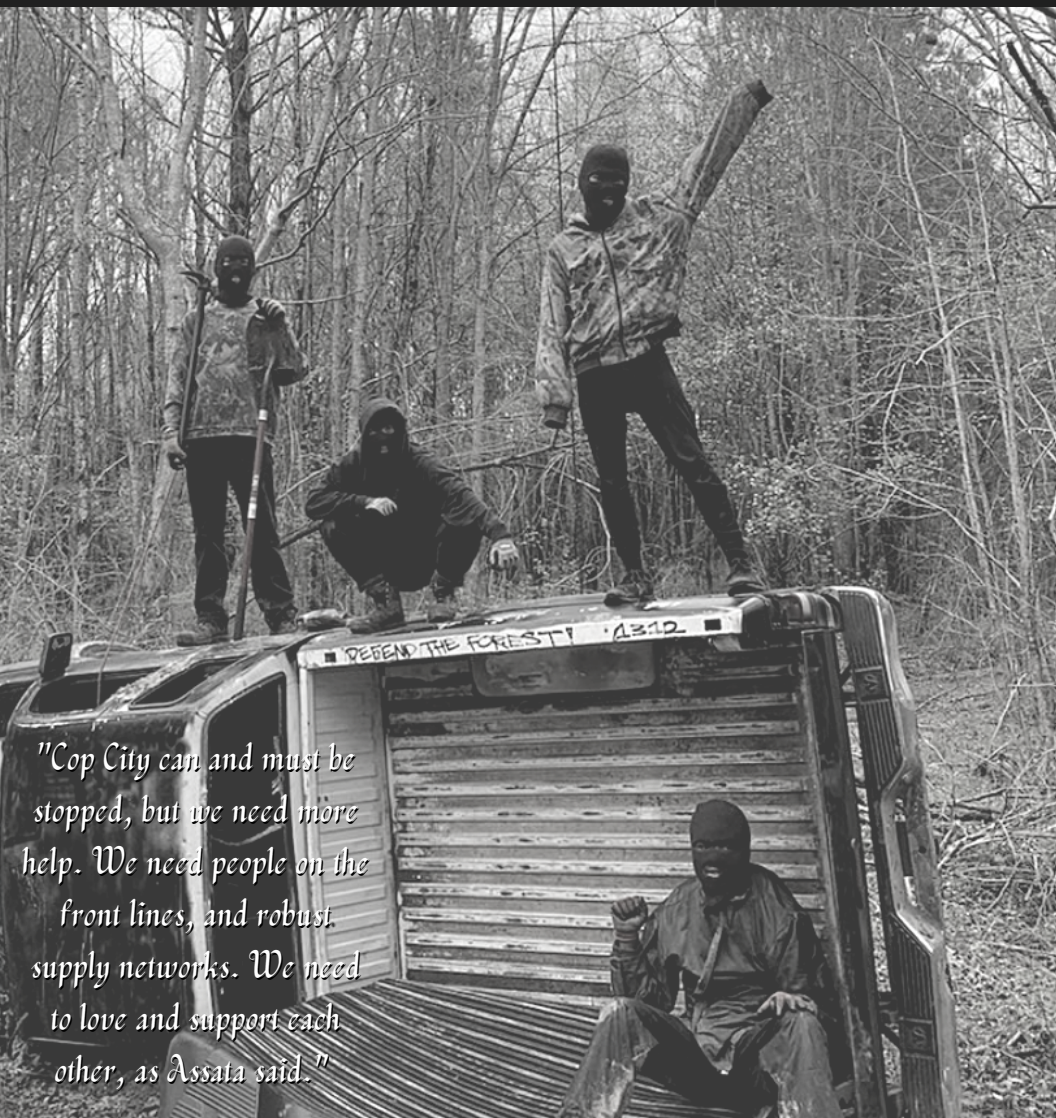


LOVE & RAGE



ACAB



"WITHIN THE MOVEMENT, THERE'S THIS CONSTANT STRUGGLE TO AVOID CONCENTRATION OF POWER, TO DISSEMINATE DECISION-MAKING," A FOREST DEFENDER WHO GOES BY TORTUGITA TOLD ME. "IT'S HARDER TO DO ANYTHING BECAUSE PEOPLE ARE ACCUSTOMED TO FOLLOWING ORDERS AND HAVING STRICT HIERARCHIES. IT GETS TRICKY WHEN YOU NEED TO DO SOMETHING QUICKLY, BUT EVERYTHING KIND OF WORKS OUT."

"THE DECISION TO ORGANIZE THE MOVEMENT THIS WAY IS STRATEGIC. IF NOBODY'S IN CHARGE, NOBODY CAN NEGOTIATE AWAY DEMANDS. IN FACT, NOBODY CAN NEGOTIATE AT ALL. "THERE'S NO WAY TO CO-OPT IT," SAID TORTUGITA. IT'S UNREASONABLE BY DESIGN.

"IT'S INCREDIBLY IMPORTANT TO CONTINUE HAVING POPULAR SUPPORT," SAID TORTUGITA, WHO USES THEY/THEM PRONOUNS. "COP CITY IS INCREDIBLY UNPOPULAR ALREADY. WE'RE VERY POPULAR. WE'RE COOL." THEY LAUGHED AS THEY SAID THAT LAST BIT, BUT, WITHOUT A DOUBT, THE MOVEMENT HAS SUCCEEDED IN PAINTING THE FOREST DEFENDERS AS A SCRAPPY, IDEALISTIC DAVID BATTLING A HEARTLESS, MONEYED GOLIATH. "WE GET A LOT OF SUPPORT FROM PEOPLE WHO LIVE HERE, AND THAT'S IMPORTANT BECAUSE WE WIN THROUGH NONVIOLENCE. WE'RE NOT GOING TO BEAT THEM AT VIOLENCE. BUT WE CAN BEAT THEM IN PUBLIC OPINION, IN THE COURTS EVEN."

ONE DAY, I WATCHED TORTUGITA FISH THE PAPERBACK COPY OF THE COMMUNIST MANIFESTO FROM AN UNLIT FIRE PIT IN MOCK HORROR. "DON'T BURN THE COMMUNIST MANIFESTO!" THEY EXCLAIMED. "I MEAN, MARX ISN'T PERFECT, BUT HE'S OK."

"THIS IS MY HOME NOW," TORTUGITA SAID. "WE'VE BUILT A NICE COMMUNITY HERE. IT'S ABOUT RECLAIMING THE PARKS AND PUBLIC SPACE. SQUATTERS' RIGHTS."

BUT WASN'T THERE SOMETHING MORE IMMEDIATELY ACHIEVABLE? AN INCREMENTAL VICTORY? TORTUGITA LOOKED AT THE RAINWATER CASCADING OFF THE ASPHALT AND COLLECTING IN EXPANDING POOLS BENEATH OUR FEET.

"THIS," THEY SAID, NODDING. "WE'RE WINNING EVERY DAY WE'RE OUT HERE. IT'S A KICK TO THE COPS' MORALE. EVERY PARTY WE HAVE IS A SUCCESS. EVERY TIME SOMEBODY HAS A NICE, WARM, DRY PLACE TO SLEEP IN THE WOODS."

TORTUGITA MOTIONED TOWARD THE RAIN AND SHRUGGED. "WELL, MAYBE NOT DRY. LESS WET."

"DEAR COMRADES, WE ARE IN THE TRENCHES OF THE CLASS WAR. THE CAPITALISTS WOULD RATHER SEE US DEAD OR ENSLAVED, SO WE MUST FIGHT LIKE HELL. THE POLICE TERRORIZE THE MARGINALIZED WHILE POLITICIANS PANDER AND THE RICH PARASITIZE. BILLIONAIRES ARE CAUSING A MASS EXTINCTION AND CAN ONLY BE STOPPED BY COLLECTIVE ACTION.

COP CITY CAN AND MUST BE STOPPED, BUT WE NEED MORE HELP. WE NEED PEOPLE ON THE FRONT LINES, AND ROBUST SUPPLY NETWORKS. WE NEED TO LOVE AND SUPPORT EACH OTHER, AS ASSATA SAID.

IF YOU CAN SEND US MONEY, PLEASE DO. IF YOU CAN'T SPARE ANY CHANGE THERE ARE MANY OTHER WAYS TO HELP STOP COP CITY; TELL EVERYONE WHO WILL LISTEN ABOUT OUR STRUGGLE, COME LIVE IN THE FOREST, PROTEST IN THE STREETS, HELP YOUR LOCAL ABOLITIONISTS AND MUTUAL AID ORGS, BE GAY DO CRIME, OR JUST SEND US GOOD VIBES! WHATEVER YOU CHOOSE TO DO, PLEASE DON'T TALK TO COPS, OR CAUSE HARM TO YOUR FELLOW WORKERS."

— TORTUGUITA, OCTOBER 15 2022